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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6119  
INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 4012  
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 6356

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000651

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/AWH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/4/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: PARENTS OF DETAINED ACTIVIST NGUYEN TIEN TRUNG RAISE ACCESS,  
LEGAL CONCERNS

REF: A) HANOI 633 B) HANOI 820

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CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth J. Fairfax, Consul General, U.S.  
Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In a visit with ConGenOff on October 28, the parents of detained democracy activist Nguyen Tien Trung said they have not been able to visit their son or find him legal counsel due to MPS intimidation of potential lawyers. Trung's father, a decorated war veteran, has been forced into retirement and both parents were expelled from the Communist Party after Trung's July 7 arrest. Despite their troubles, both parents remain in good spirits and expressed their appreciation for the USG's continued support and advocacy for their son's release. End Summary.

Legal Counsel Intimidated

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[1](#)2. (C) On October 28, ConGenOff met with the parents of Nguyen Tien Trung, the blogger and member of both the Viet Youth for Democracy and Democratic Party of Vietnam who was arrested for "propagandizing against the state" under the vague national security law, Article 88, along with Bloc 8406 activist Tran Kim on July 7 (Ref A). Both parents said they have been unable to secure defense counsel for Trung because the lawyers they have spoken to have been discouraged from taking the case by public security police. HCMC human rights lawyer Dang Dzong initially agreed to represent Trung, but declined the case after being detained by authorities in September. Trung's parents then convinced Hanoi-based lawyer Tran Lam to take up the case, but he was later informed by the MPS that he could not represent Trung due to conflict of interest issues. Trung's parents said they are in discussions with a third lawyer from the HCMC Bar Association, but have not finalized an agreement yet.

[1](#)3. (C) Note: Dzong has previously told ConGenOff that he was questioned about his connection to lawyer Le Cong Dinh and previous meetings with Mission officers shortly after state media ran televised "confessions" by Dinh, Trung and other recently arrested activists (ref B). Dzong was co-counsel with Dinh in several prominent dissident trials, including the appeals trial for lawyers Le Thi Cong Nhan and Nguyen Van Dai. He was also part of the HCMC Bar Association panel that met with former Deputy Secretary Negroponte last year, which Dinh referenced in his televised "confession." End Note.

14. (C) During our meeting and in subsequent foreign press interviews, Trung's mother said his family has not been able to visit him since his arrest, as family visitation is not allowed during the initial investigative period for suspects of national security crimes. The initial four month investigative period will end this week but can be extended three more times for a total period of sixteen months if police request more time. Trung's father said one MPS contact told him that Trung would not be released "until after the 2011 Party Congress." Trung's parents have been able to send him money and were told by prison guards that Trung is in good health.

#### Parents Expelled From the Party

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15. (C) Trung's father said he retired from his position as an aviation engineer for the state-owned HCMC airport authority after being demoted from chief technician to administrative clerk. He said the demotion came after police discovered that they had passed on letters Trung wrote to ConGenOff and the Swedish PolOff, copies of which were found during a search of their home. The police passed this information on to Party cadre at the airport authority who then conducted a self-criticism session for Trung's father which resulted in his fellow employees being asked to select his "punishment" from a list of options. Trung's mother said she and her husband were expelled from the Party in August for "failing to give their children a proper political education" and were forced to read self-criticisms during a ward-level Party meeting. Both said the police have threatened to take away their home and property and continue to monitor their movements.

16. (SBU) Both parents said their biggest concern is the lack of due process in Trung's case, adding that they hoped continued

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pressure from the international community would improve Trung's chances for a short prison term. Both parents expressed their appreciation when ConGenOff informed them that his case has been raised by USG officials at all levels, as well as by representatives from the EU, Canada and other like-minded countries.

17. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.  
FAIRFAX